



The Seventieth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,859th Concert

Steven Spooner, pianist

November 27, 2011
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Schubert/Liszt

Wohin? (Where?) S. 565-5

Ständchen (Serenade) S. 560-7

From *Schwanengesang* (Swan Song)

Erlkönig (Elf King), S. 558

Mohammed Fairouz (b. 1985)

Piano Sonata no. 2 (2011)

The Last Resistance

Retro Recollections on 21st and 8th

Freud Goes to Abu Ghraib

Men and Women in Dark Times

Washington Premiere Performance

INTERMISSION

Lassen/Liszt

Lose, Himmel, meine Seele (Heaven, Redeem My Soul), S. 495

Chopin/Liszt

Maiden's Wish, S. 480

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Saint François de Paule marchant sur les flots

(Saint Francis de Paul Walking on the Water)

From *Légendes*, S. 175 (1864)

Il penseroso (The Thoughtful Man)

From *Années de pèlerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage), Book II (“Italie”),

S. 161 (1858)

Hungarian Rhapsody no. 13, S. 244-13 (1853)

Sponsored by the Richard B. and Sarah J. Marsten Charitable

Remainder Unitrust

The Musicians

Described as “dazzling” by the *Washington Post*, Steven Spooner has performed around the world and is quickly becoming one of the noted American pianists of his generation. He has given solo recitals at Carnegie Hall and numerous venues in Europe, including the Great Hall of the Liszt Academy in Budapest, the Salle Cortot in Paris, and the Vredenburg Centre in Utrecht, as well as major concert halls in Latin America and South America. A prize-winner at each of the seven international piano competitions he has entered, he took top prizes at the Artlivre International Piano Competition and the Hilton Head International Piano Competition. During his time of study at the Paris Conservatory, he earned its *Premier Prix* and received the Niekamp Career Grant as most outstanding pianist in French music.

Spooner has released fourteen recordings on the EMR Classics, Everythingmusic, and IU recording labels. In addition to the Paris Conservatory, he studied at the Moscow and Tbilisi conservatories in the former Soviet Union and earned his doctorate at Indiana University. Thanks to an Ivory Classics Foundation prize, he was able to undertake additional studies with the legendary virtuoso Earl Wild.

A member of the artist faculty of the Amalfi Coast Music Festival in Vietri sul Mare, Italy; the Adam Gyorgy Castle Academy in Budapest, Hungary; and the International Institute for Young Musicians in Lawrence, Kansas, Spooner is increasingly in demand for his engaging and energetic master classes at the Liszt Academy of Music and the music conservatories of Beijing, Milan, Paris, and Shanghai. A Steinway artist, he currently serves on the piano faculty at the University of Kansas.

Program Notes

Straddling Eastern and Western idioms, Arab American composer Mohammed Fairouz has emerged as a force on the musical scene. His music has been heard at Carnegie Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall, and the Kennedy Center as well as in Australia, Europe, and the Middle East. He has received commissions from Alea III (Boston University), Alwan for the Arts, Counter-induction, the Cygnus Ensemble, Imani Winds (Legacy Commission), Musicians for Harmony, Northeastern University, and the Second Instrumental Unit, among others. Recognized in 2008 by the New England Conservatory with the prestigious Tourjee Alumni Award, Fairouz is also a recipient of the Malcolm Morse Memorial Award, the NEC Honors award, awards from the Merit Funds of the New England and Boston Conservatories, and a national citation from the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Washington for outstanding achievement in artistry and scholarship. Fairouz's teachers of composition include Halim El-Dabh, John Heiss, Malcolm Peyton, Gunther Schuller, and Yehudi Wyner. Commissioned by Reach Out Kansas, Inc., his second piano sonata was written to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Franz Liszt.

About the sonata, Fairouz writes: "*My Second Piano Sonata* ("The Last Resistance") takes its title from a collection of essays Jacqueline Rose, a British academic who is currently professor of English at Queen Mary College, University of London. This four-movement work engages the spirit of the post-9/11 essays by prophesying difficult times ahead in the first movement; representing post-9/11 Manhattan in the second; crying out a lamentation in the third ("Freud Goes to Abu Ghraib"); and portraying men and women in dark times in a vicious finale."

In 1863 Franz Liszt received an invitation from the librarian of Pope Pius IX to seek spiritual comfort at the Oratory of the Madonna del Rosario in Rome. Upon completion of the two year retreat, Liszt took the first of four orders that were steps to the priesthood. During the same period, he composed music inspired by two religious legends—*Saint Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds* and *Saint Francis de Paul Walking on the Waters*. Representing his meditation on divine subjects, these musical legends demonstrate Liszt's

skill at pianistic coloration. In *Saint Francis de Paul Walking on the Waters*, one hears a flood of watery sounds and the turbulence that rages just under the surface of the water as Saint Francis proceeds unharmed.

Liszt's "years of pilgrimage" in Italy were filled with visits to famous landmarks and works of art, including Michelangelo's *Tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici* in the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence. Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, is memorialized by an idealized sculpture — *Il Penseroso* — representing the thoughtful life, indicated by his furrowed brow, his left elbow resting on a closed cashbox, and the index finger of his raised hand covering his mouth, as if to admonish the onlooker to silence. When the second volume of *Années de pèlerinage* was published in 1858, Liszt attached a quatrain by Michelangelo to *Il Penseroso*:

Dear to me is sleep; and more dear to be made of stone;
As long as there exists injustice and shame.
Not to see and not to hear is a great blessing to me;
Therefore, do not disturb me!
Speak softly!

Liszt's musical depiction is a severe *lento* march in minor key, with constant dotted rhythms. A walking bass accentuates the somberness of the piece until a unique moment of lightness occurs with a sequence in the music anticipatory of Richard Wagner's chromatic writing.

Having begun his recital with Liszt's transcriptions and arrangements of Schubert songs, Steven Spooner concludes with one of Liszt's nineteen *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, which the composer wrote for piano solo and later transcribed in versions for piano duet, piano trio, and full orchestra. Marked by sudden changes in tempo from slow to fast (*lassu* and *friss*), they spring from the composer's love of Hungarian folk dance melodies and rhythms.

*Program notes by Stephen Ackert, head of the music department,
National Gallery of Art*

Next week at the National Gallery of Art

Pacifica String Quartet

Music by Beethoven

December 4, 2011

Sunday, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court



Thomas Hrynkiw, pianist

Music by Ukrainian composers

December 7, 2011

Wednesday, 12:10 pm

East Building Auditorium



The Rose Ensemble

Early Mediterranean Arab, Christian,
and Sephardic music

December 11, 2011

Sunday, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov